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85th

Eighty-fifth Anniversary

. . . of the . . .

Palestine Lutheran
Congregation



June 30th, 1940



Historical Souvenir

1855-1940



HUXLEY, IOWA

(RURAL ROUTE)

87

1946362

Maland, Andrew

85th anniversary of the Palestine
Lutheran Congregation, 1855-
1940, Huxley Iowa June 30, 1940

Book being xeroxed from Iowa Bicent record center

The Palestine
Lutheran Church



The Center that Unity
Your American Lutheran
Bicentennial Commission
STATE HOUSE 2-3
DES MOINES, IOWA 50319

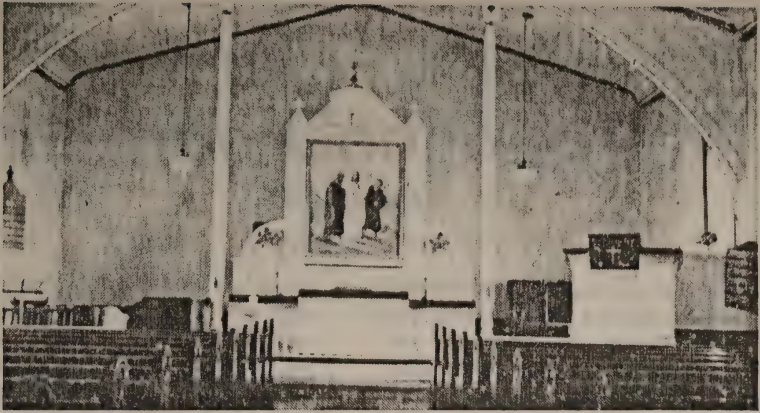


The Palestine Lutheran Church



Rec Center - West Bldg.
Iowa American Revolution
Bicentennial Commission

STATE HOUSE 2-3
DES MOINES, IOWA 50319



Interior view of the Church



The Palestine Parsonage

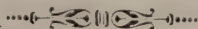


Compiled by
Andrew Maland
Slater, Iowa

The Slater News Press
Slater, Iowa

A History of the Palestine Congregation

1855-1940



The early history of the Palestine congregation is very much the history of the first colony that settled in Palestine and Union townships, Story county, Iowa, in June 1855, the people that composed the two being very much the same.

The thought of forming a congregation had its inception in the winter of 1854 and 1855, when a group of men and women, over a hundred in all, decided to leave the vicinity of Lisbon, Illinois, and move to Iowa, there to establish their homes.

There was a reason for this decision to move further west. For several years, through the latter forties and the early fifties, the emigration from Norway to Lisbon and the Fox river settlements had been especially heavy with the result that good government land in these vicinities was not to be had at the regulation price, \$1.25 an acre. Late comers were badly disappointed as a result as their means would not permit them to acquire good farm land at the price asked. This disappointment was shared by many, the settlement being badly overcrowded. To them the picture was anything but bright.

At this time there appeared in the colony a Norwegian peddler, a representative of a Milwaukee Bible society, who was selling Bibles, tracts, pamphlets and other literature. His name was Nils Olson Nass. He brought them the cheering news that out in Iowa there were thousands of acres of good government land to be had at \$1.25 an acre.

This news created a big stir in the settlement as might be expected.

Disappointments gave way to smiles and tears of joy among late comers for had they not heard from Mr. Nass' own lips of the opportunities that awaited them further west, where homesteads could be had at their own choosing?

As the news was told and retold the picture of the country that was awaiting them beyond the Mississippi became more wonderful with every passing day, so vivid and marvelous that it started everybody talking.

While the excitement was at its height the more thoughtful and serious minded, plus the land speculators, began to question the truth of all the stories that were in circulation and counseled more earnest thinking—that men and women should exercise more care and not believe everything that Mr. Nass had told them. To further dampen the enthusiasm some ventured the statement that probably Nass was the representative of an Iowa land company. Others added more "cold water," claiming that all that went west were throwing their lives away—that the endless space that lay beyond the Mississippi river was nothing but a vast wilderness where nothing would thrive but cactus and poisonous snakes.

Talk as they might the Viking spirit of romance and adventure (and there was plenty of it among the young men) would not down and the discussion went on without abatement.

In the course of events someone proposed a compromise and suggested that they make an investigation in an effort to get at the real truth about the land in Iowa. The propo-

sition had a favorable reception and a meeting was called to talk things over.

The meeting was held as suggested with the result that four of the settlement's most able men were chosen to go to Iowa, to thoroughly investigate the land and the general conditions for establishing a settlement there. Those chosen were Osmond Sheldahl, Ole Fatland, Osmond Johnson and Ole Apland.

The four left Lisbon on September 24th, 1854, and rode in a spring wagon, drawn by two horses. They traveled over what was known as the California trail and had planned to go as far as Omaha. They had provisions to last them several weeks and plenty of clothes to keep them warm, night and day. The trip was uneventful, save for crossing several streams here and there which gave them not a little concern.

After leaving Cambridge, then in its infancy, their course took them in a southwesterly direction, over a small trail. As they progressed they became impressed with the beauty and the apparent richness of the country that lay all around them. After having traversed it they came to a stop near what is now the Palestine church. Surveying the scene that lay before them, looking northeast they saw a gently rolling prairie, land that was equal to if not superior to that of the Lisbon and the Fox River settlements in Illinois. They had found timbered creeks and farther north lay a heavy wooded tract with a fine stream of clear water—Ballard grove. Its rich wooded hills not only suggested plenty of material for the building of log huts, but fuel as well for many, many years to come. To the east was another wooded tract with clear running water—the Skunk river. They found no settlers, but a squatter here and there along the timber line. They found an abundance of water and a deep, rich soil. The scene was impressive. Yes, it was just what they wanted and they saw no need of go-

ing further west nor to extend their investigation any further.

Having made their decision they at once went to Des Moines where they filed for homesteads for themselves as well as their friends back in Illinois. With this accomplished and happy at heart they began the return trip, reaching Lisbon after an absence of two weeks.

Their safe return and their most glowing reports caused the greatest excitement in the settlement and everybody, young and old, were eager to learn about the trip from the members of the committee. To make this possible a meeting was called. Osmond Sheldahl, speaking for the committee, described the chosen Iowa land in the most glowing terms, likening it to the Canaan of the Old Testament history, which was reported by the spies on their return from a tour of inspection as "A land, flowing with milk and honey."

The fact that the land which the four had selected for themselves and their friends was the bare prairie with no roads, no schools, no churches and no markets, did not seem unsurmountable obstacles to them, sturdy Viking pioneers that they were. They had little money, but possessed a courage and a strong will to do and stood ready, eager to work out their own destiny. In this spirit they accepted the challenge of the Iowa prairies with their many problems and hardships and thus blazed the way for civilization in a new, strange country, one which they felt God had given them.

Several meetings were held following the decision of the large group to move to Iowa the following spring. Busy weeks and months followed in preparation for the event. Playing an important part were the women with their spinning wheels and their needle craft, preparing things to wear and articles for their future homes. While the women were thus engaged the men were also busy. Transportation facilities were for them the big problem — the securing of oxen,

horses, covered wagons and other conveyances for the trip. Their efforts, too, were crowned with success and the following spring found them ready for the long journey.

The people that constituted the large group that was to make the trip had come from south-western Norway.—Etne, Haugesund, Skaanevig, Fjeldberg and other parishes. Coming as they did from a country that for four-hundred years had been a Lutheran land, they were God-fearing, church-going people, deeply religious. This religious zeal and sturdy character was reflected in all their doings from the time they had landed in America. At no time after their arrival had they departed from their christian faith and practice and did not plan to deviate from this custom on their trip from Lisbon to Iowa.

In keeping with this spirit they met and organized themselves into a congregation that they might better serve their Lord and Master, that He might be their guide and protector while traveling through a strange, unknown country. Thus they affected an organization by selecting Ole Anfinson, a layman, as their pastor. Erick Sheldahl, a man with much ability as a singer, was chosen choirster (klokkar) and Knute Bauge was chosen parochial teacher. They named the congregation "Palestine" in keeping with the description of the land they were to possess on coming to Iowa.

The 17th of May, 1855, was set as the time for their departure. The meeting place was Holdeman's prairie, a short distance west from Lisbon. A large crowd was present to witness the eventful occasion and to wish them well. In the large group were 106 souls—21 families, a widow and five young men. Their personal belongings were packed into covered wagons, drawn by 18 span of oxen, 6 teams of horses and a single horse, hitched to a spring wagon. A herd of cattle completed the equipment. It was probably the largest colony of Norwegians ever to come to Iowa at

one time and very unusual in that the individuals that comprised it formed an entire congregation.

It was a strange sight as the huge caravan swung into line for their westward trip and mixed feelings filled the bosoms of many of them, joy in the thought of new homes, homes that were to be their own; sadness because of leaving behind them friends—companions from their native land. To the young men the trip into the far west, through a wild, unknown country, was hailed with delight. It was just what their romantic spirit craved and their anticipations ran high.

Strange to relate, most of the trip was uneventful, their biggest trouble being in fording streams. On one occasion the cattle got unruly and separated, but got safely across. Another time one of the wagons was caught by a swift current and wagon and oxen came near having serious trouble. On the whole progress was slow, due to the condition of the trail and the slow moving oxen.

Traveling as a group of christian emigrants they remained faithful to their religious convictions. True to the admonition to "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy," Sunday was to them not only a day of rest, but a day for worship as well. For this reason when they pitched camp every Saturday night, traveling was not resumed till the following Monday morning. On Sunday they worshiped their Lord and God.

They reached their destination on June 7th, having made the distance, some over 300 miles, in three weeks and one day. The caravan came to a halt on Osmond Sheldahl's land, north of what is now the Palestine church.

The following Sunday morning they formed a circle with their wagons as they were wont to do at the close of traveling every Saturday. This time it was to give thanks to Almighty God for His guidance and protection as they had made their journey over a strange trail, beset with many

dangers.

It has been written that "The groves were God's first temples." On this occasion it was the wild prairie, under the canopy of Heaven, a clear June sky. All being in a thankful mood the services that followed can better be imagined than described. They were led by their pastor, Rev. Ole Anfinson, and Osmund Sheldahl. Erick Sheldahl led the singing. He touched responsive chords when he started that old favorite hymn, "Nu Takker Alle Gud," (Now thank we all our God). All joined in and sang from the depths of their hearts. And what a singing it was—such as the lone prairie had never heard before nor afterwards. All in all, it was an occasion which none of those present ever forgot and which they loved to recall as the years passed on.

On the following day the work of getting located started as per survey by the federal government—that of assigning each family their respective land as selected by the committee of four. Although there might seem to be considerable differences in advantages of locations as well as quality of lands, there seems to have been no trouble in any way in the allotment that was made.

With all located each family proceeded with the best of their efforts to build their homes, humble as they may have been, and to break the sod and make the ground yield the necessities of life. All soon learned that it required hard work, strict economy and careful management to make the meager returns reach, so that the family could have food to eat, clothes to wear and shelter against the winter snows and storms and the summer's sun and rains. There were no shirkers and all realized their responsibilities.

Before proceeding to build their homes the men erected what was to be their temporary church, a hay shed, the first building in the colony. It was a simple affair with three heavy posts on each side and taller ones through the center. These sup-



The Congregation's First Church

ported the roof.

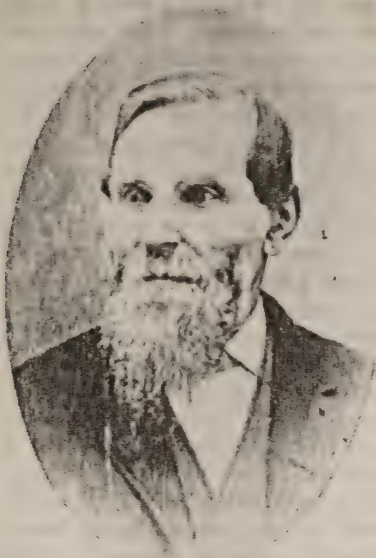
The roof was made of light logs, covered with long prairie grass. The shed had no walls. Here they held their services through the summer months. When winter came on they met in the different homes and later in the school houses. The first men to finish their homes were Lars Tesdahl, Knudt Ersland and John Severson. They were all log houses, 14 by 18 or 12 by 14. Then came the sheds for their stock. By fall all were as well settled as their limited means would permit.

Shortly after their arrival the colonists made the acquaintance of J. C. Sladen, who was operating a small store in Cambridge, then a town of only a few houses. Having lived there a winter or two, first as a squatter, he was of much help to the colonists in making preparations for the winter months, especially in conserving things which nature provided — such as wild crab-apples, grapes, nuts and honey, which were to be found in the woods as well as wild game, which was plentiful on the wild prairie. Mr. Sladen procured his supplies from Iowa City. It took him five days to make the trip.

The winter that followed was a very severe one. It was very cold and the snow was very deep, leaving the colony snowbound for several weeks. As a result some were almost reduced to the point of want and had to grind corn with the coffee grinder that they might have bread for the family. Few of the colonists had lamps, most of the homes being lighted with small homemade candles. Others used a

common saucer filled with lard into which they placed a homemade wick. This method later gave way to "kaalo" which worked on the same principle. These were later made by John Anfinson, who operated a blacksmith shop on his farm.

Rev. Ole Anfinson, a mild mannered man who was serving the congregation as its pastor, was busy from the start with his ministerial duties. He early organized a confirmation class under the roof of said hay shed. The class included Torres Weeks, Viar Weeks, Engeborg Weeks, Anfin Erslund, Anna Vee and Betsy Shaw. Confirmation services were held the following spring, 1856, at Rev. Anfinson's home.



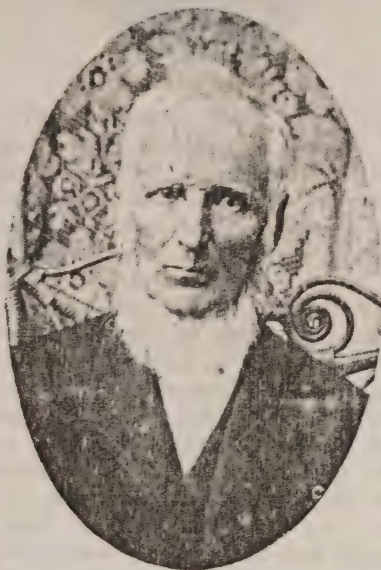
Ole Anfinson, 1855-59

The first child born in the colony was Anna Heggen, the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Solomon Heggen, July 4th, 1855. The next two children were Ole, the son of Mr. and Mrs. Ola Heggen, August 14, and Halvar Tesdahl, the son of Lars and Martha Tesdahl, September 15, 1855. The first marriage was that of Ole Apland and Anna Erslund at the Ole Fatland home. Rev. Anfinson read the ceremony. The first deaths were

those of Mrs. Knudt Erslund and Mrs. Erick Tesdahl.

The colony was increased by 32 souls September 30, 1855, when five families and a young man, comprising a caravan of five covered wagons, arrived, this time also from the Lisbon community. They had been six weeks in making the trip, due to heavy rains and cold weather and had lost one of their members, Gunder Madskar, who had died at Iowa Center, where he was also buried. Most of these people joined the congregation.

In the summer of 1857 the first school house was erected in the colony, just across the road from where now stands the church. It was built with public subscriptions. Such as had no money gave freely with their labor. It was the second home of the Palestine congregation.



Osmond Sheldahl, 1859-76

When the matter of choosing a pastor came up for consideration in January, 1859, there were two candidates as well as two groups. One group favored Rev. Anfinson; the other wanted Osmond Sheldahl. All agreed that no ill feeling should be fostered—no quarrels or bitterness.

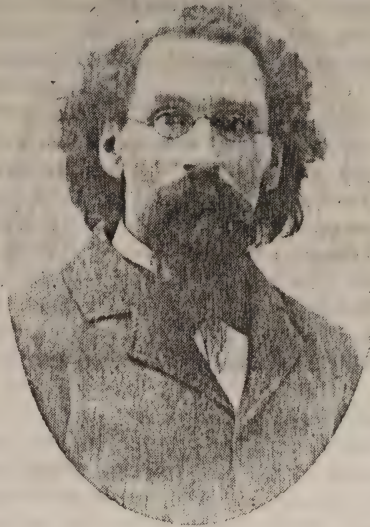
To avoid this they decided to elect by lot. Sheldahl won and was shortly afterwards ordained and installed by Rev. Haslekvest of the Augustana Synod.

The building of a new church was the major problem that faced Rev. Sheldahl when he began his work, but nothing definite was accomplished till the winter of 1860, December 28th, to be exact, when a special meeting was held at which it was decided to build the following spring, 1861. Through the winter months men were busy in the woods, cutting and hewing heavy timbers for sills, joists, beams and what not, it being the plan to use native timber only. John Anderson (John Mûrar they called him) was chosen to have the stone foundation work in charge. The work had progressed very nicely through the summer months when it came to a sudden stop because of the civil war. All being loyal to the land of their adoption they left the unfinished church building and began to conserve their resources the best they could so as to be ready to join the army when the call came.

Twenty-one of the young men enlisted and went to the front. The following are the names of the young men who enlisted from the colony: Iver Tvedt, Rev. Ole Anfinson, Tørres Scott, Erick Eglund, J. O. Johnson, J. W. Johnson, Soren Olson, Henry Eglund, Haldor Johnson, Lars Bauge, Anfin Ersland, Torres Weeks, Viar Weeks, Elias Ersland, Halvar Weeks, Severt Tesdahl, Andrew Gravdahl, Thor Holland, Thom Shaw and Lars Olson. Some of them never returned; others returned, maimed for life. It was not till 1866 that the church was finished. It was dedicated by Rev. Haselkvest the last Sunday of that year.

Parochial school work was stressed by Rev. Sheldahl. A Sunday school was also organized with John Johnson and Haldor Sheldahl in charge. In the summer of 1875 a singing school was started by J. H. Myhre, who had come to assist Rev. Sheldahl as

"kapellan." As the year progressed differences arose between Rev. Sheldahl and Myhre, causing a wide breach between the two and unrest in the congregation.



J. H. Myhre, 1876-80

The following year, 1876, Rev. Myhre was installed as pastor. In the meantime Rev. Sheldahl had withdrawn and gone to Sheldahl where he organized a congregation which he continued to serve as long as his health permitted him.

Rev. Myhre served the congregation from 1876 to 1880. The pastor had received most of his preparation in Norway, completing it at Augsburg Seminary, Minneapolis. He was an able speaker and possessed a fine tenor voice and sang his way into the hearts of many people. He did much to encourage choir and congregational singing and was instrumental in securing the first organ for the church. He was a great reader and encouraged his members to have a library of good books in their homes. He started a library in the church and collected books for it, reserving the right to reject any that he might think was not of the right kind. Books, good ones, was very much a hobby with him.

Through his efforts Konferensen held its annual convention at the Palestine church in 1880, a week in June. To care for the large crowd, sheds were built, one on each side of the church. Ministers, delegates and others from a distance were housed and fed in the various homes of the congregation.

The parsonage was built during the first year of Myhre's ministry. It was later remodeled and enlarged.

Rev. Myhre was married. His wife, who had remained in Norway, joined him shortly after he had received his call. She was a very able woman and is spoken of as one of the finest women to occupy the parsonage.



H. C. Holm, 1881-93

Rev. H. C. Holm served the congregation from 1881 to 1893. He had worked in the congregation for several years as its parochial school teacher and was well and favorably known. He was a born leader, a good speaker and a very capable organizer. His coming to the helm served as a tonic to the congregation in more ways than one—a larger attendance at the services, a bigger Sunday school; a larger choir and an increased attendance at prayer meetings.

The congregation did an unusual thing at one meeting—choosing a group of men and women to sing in the choir. They were Cornilus Holand, Tom Larson, Ola Frette, Thomas Tvedt, Christine Sheldahl, Olava Porter, Serine Olson (Wald), Lena Johnson, Anna Tesdahl, Jennie Wilson, Martha, Amundson and Margaret Larson. Martha Gurine Nerness was the organist.

There was a deep interest in church work in general and laymen and emiserer visited the congregation from time to time, conducting evangelistic meetings in the church and at homes.

In 1884 it was decided to enlarge the church and to build a new one at Cambridge. This was done in 1885 and 1886. Both were dedicated in September, 1888 by Rev. J. Olson of St. Ansgar, Iowa.

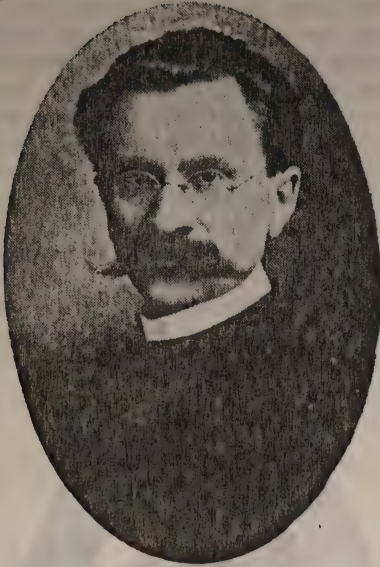
In addition to serving the Palestine and the Bethlehem congregations, Rev. Holm also served the Zion Lutheran church in Des Moines for a number of years. Rev. Holm was given a two months' vacation in 1884 that he might visit needy Norwegian congregations in Colorado—Denver, Leadville, Ogden and other cities.

In 1889 the congregation went on record as favoring a union of all the Norwegian Lutheran churches of America and instructed its delegates to the annual conference to work in the interest of such a union.

On January 12th, 1891, the Bergen church of the Anti-Missourianske Broderskab was accepted and made a part of Palestine congregation, in all 31 families and some single persons. Rev. O. C. Farseth had been their pastor.

Rev. Holm resigned as pastor of the congregation, August 22nd, 1893. His resignation was accepted by the congregation and Rev. N. B. Tvedt was chosen to succeed him. He accepted, but did not assume his duties till the following spring, 1894.

Rev. Tvedt, who had been serving a charge at Benton county, Iowa, received his education in Norway. He was a dignified, serious minded man



N. B. Thvedt, 1894-97

and a good sermonizer. One of his first acts was to organize a young people's society, strictly of a religious character and supervised by the pastor. A Sunday school was also organized in the Heggen school house with Ole Markhus as superintendent. This was to accommodate such members of the congregation as lived in that vicinity and quite a distance from the church.

To further familiarize himself with the English language Rev. Tvedt asked for a two months' leave-of-absence that he might attend a college, preferably a school belonging to the United church.

Rev. Thvedt resigned in March, 1897. The congregation received it with regrets. His work had been very acceptable to all and they wished that he could have continued. He was succeeded by Rev. A. L. Huus of Decorah, Iowa.

Rev. Huus, a graduate of Luther college, Decorah, served the congregation from 1897 to 1902. He was a quiet, reserved man and spoke English fluently. He took up his work in the congregation in the fall of 1897 and stepped into a very favor-

able situation. A series of meetings had been in progress in the congregation, conducted by Emiser J. J. Brekke. They had been well attended and had resulted in a spiritual awakening that had gripped many. So pleased was the congregation that it passed a resolution at its January meeting, voicing its thanks and appreciation and urged that the meetings be continued. It read in part: "With thanks to Almighty God we acknowledge that the special devotional meetings that have been held in the congregation have brought blessings to many souls, and urge that they be continued a week or two longer and that Emiser Brekke be asked to assist in the blessed work as he has in the past. As a remuneration for his labors the congregation promises to lay another offering on the altar for him." The work continued as urged with "showers of blessings."

The matter of English services at intervals through the year was acted upon favorably and a committee was appointed to provide English Hymaries. This was the beginning of regular English services in the church.



A. L. Huus, 1897-1902

Rev. Huus resigned in April, 1902, that he might accept a call from Crookston, Minn. Rev. N. B. Thvedt and Student Axel Shefveldand were named as candidates. Rev. Thvedt refused to consider the call. Shefveldand was then the unanimous choice and visited the congregation in January, 1903. He was then a theological student at the United Church Seminary in St. Paul. He completed his work and was ordained in June. He was installed and took up his work in the congregation in July that year.



Axel Shefveldand, 1903-12

Rev. Shefveldand, having grown to young manhood in the congregation, the call to come and serve his church as its pastor, voiced a confidence in his ability and fitness for the work as nothing else could. Able and willing he took up his duties with zeal and ten years of earnest, faithful efforts followed.

At his first annual meeting, 1904, a number of families and single persons were added to the church. At this same meeting it was voted to hold a mission festival in March that year.

Great interest was manifested in the work as years passed on—in the church services, the "Pige Forening,"

the Sunday school, the choir, the Ladies' Aid and the parochial school.

Rev. Shefveldand resigned in October, 1911. From among the number of candidates named to succeed him, Peder Buland was chosen in 1912. His ordination and installation followed shortly after that.

Rev. Buland, being a member of the Nazareth church at Cambridge, had been of much assistance to Rev. Shefveldand for several years and was thus acquainted with the work. He had every qualification and took up his duties with the same zeal and earnestness that had marked the efforts of his predecessor. The charge remained the same, Palestine and Nazareth, with monthly meetings at the Lincoln church at Huxley.

The church's Cemetery Association, which had been organized and was doing some very effective work in beautifying the place, was given a rising vote of thanks. O. S. Swandahl was its chairman.

In January, 1920, it was voted to build a basement under the church, to add height to the walls and to install a heating plant, the money to be raised by subscription. This was done and proved a fine improvement.



Peder Buland, 1913-1939



Rev. and Mrs. H. E. Jacobson and Paul Joseph

It provides room for Sunday school, the Ladies' Aid and other gatherings.

Rev. Buland resigned in the fall of 1938 that he might accept the superintendency of the Sunset Home at Story City.

—O—

Rev. H. E. Jacobson, 1939

Rev. H. E. Jacobson, who succeeded Buland, took up his work in the congregation, April 16, 1939. In the prime of life and permeated with a deep christian zeal he took up his duties with an earnestness that reflects the most sincere efforts. His wholeheartedness has added to the general interest and his members bespeak for him a blessed, successful pastorate.

In 1939 it was voted to dispense with the levying system in the church, adopting in its stead the pledge method.

The fall of that year was highlighted with a very substantial gift to the congregation, a Hammond electric organ by Endren Johnson, a young man and member of the church. Later he added a system of chimes. The gifts were formally received by the church at its services on Sunday, December 11th. As an expression of their pleasure and appreciation the congregation had a reception for Mr. Johnson in Janu-

ary, 1940.

It was also voted to celebrate the 85th anniversary of the church in the summer and that the deacons have it in charge.

—O—

The Prayer meeting and Bible Study groups have been more or less active from time to time. Although there does not seem to have been any great spiritual awakening in large numbers, yet from time to time, old and young have had a living experience of the grace of God unto salvation. At the present time a little band of faithful ones gather regularly for prayer and Bible study and to bear witness of the saving power of Jesus Christ. To Him alone be the glory.

—O—

Recorded Ministerial Acts

The Ministerial records of the congregation are not complete. It seems that no record was kept of those who were confirmed in their baptismal covenant until 1880. We have no record of burials until the year 1875. But according to the records as they are today 1,698 have been baptized, including a very few adult baptisms and 767 have been confirmed since 1880. 624 marriages have been recorded and 426 burials.

NORWEGIAN REPORT BY COMMITTEE OF FOUR

Vi har udført vor mission og fundet et land som overgaar vore største forhaabninger i sjonhed og frugtbarhed. Der er jevne, solbelyste bakker, men ingen stene; rig of saftige gresgange, men ingen flom. Godt vand er der og lune skovlunde langs alle vaserdrag. Det er visselig et land som, lig Kaleb's Kanaan, flyder af melk og honning. Dog uligt hint lovpriste land har vi ingen fiende at frygte. Der var mørke Jebusiter og Amoniter og de store Anaks sønner som stengte veien for Guds udvalgte folk til Kanaans land.

Engang var her vel kanske røde indianere som galloperede på jagt efter store buffalo, men nu har de reist til fjerne jagtmarker. Nu ligger landet stille og fredlyst og venter paa os. Brødre, det er et land som Herren har beredt for os.

Fra Norges fjeldkroge kom vi hvor vi maatte bryde mark i stenrig urpaa bratte lid, mellem flom of skred, hvor beiter laa i isbrand of skygge dale. Her kan vi strekke vore lemmer i rolig gang med plog og sigt og den fede muljord vil rigt belønne vort arbeide.

Vi har faaet papir fra rejeringen hvorved vor ret til landet er sikkeret til siste tid.

A Free English Translation of Above Report

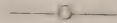
We have fulfilled our mission and found a land that far exceeded our fondest expectations in beauty and fruitfulness. It is a land of level, sunny hills without any rocks; of rich green pastures without danger of floods. It has good water and sheltering woods along all water courses.

It is surely a land like Caleb's Canaan, flowing with milk and honey, but unlike that renowned land, there are no enemies to make us fear. There are no Jebusites and Amorites nor the powerful sons of Anak, who barred the entrance to God's chosen people into the Promised Land.

At one time, no doubt, red Indians galloped over the prairie, hunting buffaloes, but have now gone to more distant hunting grounds. Now the land is lying in quiet peace, waiting for us to come. Brothers, it is the land that the Lord has prepared for us.

From Norway's mountain passes we came, where we had to break stony ground on steep hills, between floods and slides, where our pastures lay in ice-bound and shady hills. Here we can comfortably stretch our limbs in peaceful pursuit, following plow and scythe and the rich soil will abundantly repay us for our work.

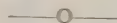
From the government we have secured papers which will secure our rights to the land for all time to come.



Synodical Affiliations

Through the first four years of its existence the congregation had no synodical affiliations. In June, 1859 it joined the Swedish Agustana Synod of Northern Illinois by adopting its constitution. In 1873 it joined Konferensen and in 1890 became a part of the United Norwegian Lutheran Church. On February 21, 1917 it severed its relations with the N. L. C. A. and has been independent since that time.

Though not being a member of the Norwegian Lutheran Church of America, organized in 1917, Palestine congregation has never failed in the financial support of the activities of the Synod. Every year, as a rule, its budget apportionment has been contributed in full.



Men Who Served in the World War

During the World war (1917-18) nine young men from Palestine congregation answered the call to the colors. One of them never returned. Carl Hokel laid down his life on the battlefield of France. The following are those who were in the service of their country at that time: John Tweedt, Roy Tesdall, Andrew Wenos, Joe Apland, John Ness, Carl Hokel, Eli Wee, R. B. Wee and Chris L. Wee.

The Story of the Early Pioneers

Like a Chapter from History

The story of the early pioneers reads like a chapter from the early history of our country—so Puritan like in spirit. Like the Pilgrims and the Puritans, they were deeply religious and the church was a part of their life—had been from their childhood and they brought the church with them, so to speak, to America. As a result they had a whole-hearted respect for all things holy.

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An Event in Norse History

The 106 souls that comprised the now famous caravan of 1855 were making history as they progressed westward. Traveling as a congregation, something never heard of before nor since, made the trip an outstanding event in the history of the Norwegians in America, a feat worthy of a place among the major accomplishments of these people in the land of their adoption. Its inception was as thoughtful as it was unique and reflected the deep religious convictions that marked all the early Norse emigrants. Verily, they were an honor to the race and the land from which they came.

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Two Experiences Could Easily Have Been Serious

They had two experiences that did not look good. In crossing a river on a barge made out of logs the cattle got unruly, broke the enclosure and jumped into the water. However, they all swam to the shore and were none the worse. On another occasion one of the covered wagons, drawn by a pair of oxen, got into a swift current and were being carried away. The wagon box had already started to float when the driver called for help. Osmond Sheldahl, seeing the danger that beset those in the wagon, called for volunteers to go to their assistance. He got plenty of help and the wagon, the occupants and the oxen were all saved from what might have been a watery grave. Most of the men knew

their stuff when it came to swimming, they having mastered the art in the far off Norway fjords when mere boys.

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What Food Had the Women Provided for the Trip

What to eat on the trip was their least worry, at least among the men, who had other things to think of. While the caravan had no special Commissary wagon, there was ample food stored away in the different wagons to insure eats for everybody—for the meals and at lunch time. (They had to stop now and then to rest the cattle as well as the tiring horses and oxen—and a lunch, of course). Among the food supplies were a barrel of flatbrød, a barrel of kringla, tubs filled with kavring (rusks), cookies and other delicacies. Also liberal supplies of prim ost, fat ost, gammel ost and what not. No, they did not suffer from want of food.

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Those Pioneers Showed Good Judgment Choosing Land

The members of the Committee of Four proved good land agents for their friends in selecting homesteads that lay along or near a creek, a water course that starts east of Huxley and continues east and south-east till it empties into the Skunk river.

Take a position at the Palestine church and face northeast and you have toward the north the two Sheldahl farms and the Heggen and the Fatland farms; looking east and northeast you have the John Johnson, the Knute Bauge, the Shur Gravdahl and the Wier Weeks farms. Further east we have the Ole Apeland, the Lars Tesdahl, the Anfin Ersland, the John Severson and the Mas Mason farms. The reason for selecting these is very obvious—they were all near running water—water for the household necessities as well as the stock. The slope of the land also assured draining facilities, making most of it tillable almost under any condition.

Nazareth Church at Cambridge

At a meeting held in May, 1884, the Palestine congregation decided to "enlarge and repair the church and to build a new one at Cambridge." The decision to build a church at Cambridge was primarily for the benefit of such members of the congregation as lived in Cambridge and vicinity. While much of the subscription money was raised that summer, work on the church was postponed till the following year, 1885, when it was built and completed. Its dedication took place in September, 1888.

Its building did not mean another congregation at that time as it remained a part of Palestine and was regularly served by the pastor in charge. It was ruled by the same officers, selected at the annual meeting of the congregation, including such as were necessary for the local work—Sunday school superintendent, janitor, choister, etc., which were also chosen at the annual meetings.

At its meeting on January 13, 1902 the congregation received a petition from a group of voting members of Cambridge and vicinity, asking that they be given the privilege to form themselves into an independent congregation and be given the church property at Cambridge. The request was turned over to a special committee to consider the matter and to report at a later meeting.

The committee reported favorably on the petition at a meeting held on January 28, 1902. The congregation then instructed its trustees to deed over the congregation's property at Cambridge to the proposed organization for the sum of one dollar, which was done.

The new congregation then met at Cambridge on February 6, 1902 and organized as "The Nazareth, the First Evangelical Lutheran Church of Cambridge, Story County, Iowa," and

chose the following officers:

Trustees: C. E. Larson, John Fatland, A. A. Richardson, John O. Johnson and H. R. Sheldahl.

Deacons: Jonas Lewis, Oliver Hill, Anfin Anfinson, Tobias Severson, Peder Buland and Viar Weeks.

Secretary—Lewis Reiersen.

Treasurer: A. M. Mason.

Sunday School Superintendent—Oliver Hill; Assistant, Peder Buland. Belle Mason, organist.

Peder Buland, klokkar.

The congregation has been functioning ever since, served by the same pastor as the Palestine church.

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The Fieldberg Congregation Organized in 1865

The Fieldberg congregation was organized in 1865 at the home of Torres Skarveland, half a mile south from what is now the town of Huxley. The following year, 1866, steps were taken to build a church, a mile west from the Palestine church. Rev. N. Amlund of Story City was their first pastor. The congregation had a healthy growth from the start. It received the name, "Fjeldberg," in memory of the place in Norway from which many of the charter members came. The congregation later affiliated with the Norwegian Synod.

Shortly after the congregation had been organized a number of the charter members withdrew from the Palestine church and joined the newly organized church. Most of them had come from the Fjeldberg parish in Norway, the same as most of Fieldberg's charter members.

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Professional Men and Women in the Congregation

Through the passing years a number of professional men and women have developed in the congregation. Others, born in the congregation, grew to manhood or womanhood in other communities. Among them are the following:

PREACHERS: Ole O. Wald, John Stenberg, Osmund Johnson, Ole Nor-

em and Axel Shefveld.

LAWYERS: S. O. Wald, Edwin Severson, John Brown and Ed Tesdahl.

DOCTORS: Ole Fatland and Geo. J. Severson.

SCHOOL TEACHERS: Ole Fatland, Lars and Edward Johnson, (Oino), Andrew Tesdahl, Osmond Johnson, Prof. P. O. Holland, Carrie Tesdahl (Mrs. Geo. Nelson), Martha Tesdahl (Mrs. Ed Raynes), Maggie Sheldahl (Mrs. Elias Ersland), Jennie Tesdahl (Mrs. Osmond Ritland), Bessie Wald (Mrs. Andrew Maland), Osmond J. Viland, J. E. Johnson, Burton Wald, Nellie Larson, Edward Tesdell, Mary Larson (Mrs. Nels M. Flugum), Ada Tesdahl (Mrs. Martin Dobbe), Evangeline Tesdahl (Mrs. Herman Thomas), Andrew Maland, Evalina Maland, Erma Maland (Mrs. Truman Nelson), Myrtle Maland, Levi Lewis, Carrie Severson (Mrs. Chet Persen), George Severson, Severt Severson, Joan Sheldahl (Mrs. Tracy).

Parochial School Teachers

These are the names of most of the men and women who have taught parochial school in the congregation: Knut Bauge, Osmond Sheldahl, Erick Johnson, Haldor Sheldahl, O. G. Nerness, Ola Frette, Ole O. Wald, I. H. Kofoed, Serine Olson (Wald), C. Theodore, Lars Torresdahl, Osmond Viland, Borgen Molstre, H. C. Holm, E. H. Myhre, Hans Oppdahl, Torkel Heggen, Anna Ostrem, Nels Tosseland, J. O. Jessing, Torger Thompson, Bertha Viland, Marie and Carrie Larson, Ole Norem, Axel Shefveld, Bessie Iverson, Lydia Sheldahl, David Stove, Mr. Sunde, Joan Sheldahl, Agnes Berhow, Robert Larson, Dorothy Larson and Mrs. Eli Wee.

Men Who Have Served as Secretaries

Many have served the congregation as secretaries for longer or shorter periods. The three having served the longest are John Stenberg,

Sam Maland and John Johnson. Some served as secretaries pro-tem, but are not mentioned in this list. The number include Knut Bauge, Torres Skarveland, J. Hemmingson, Torres T. Scott, Gustav Jacobson, Theodore Peterson, H. A. Sheldahl, John Johnson, Lewis Rierson, T. Nervig, Henry O. Sheldahl, T. O. Larson, Hans Stenberg, Ole O. Wald, John Stenberg, I. H. Kofoed, E. H. Sheldahl, P. Buland, Sam. Maland, A. A. Fjelland.

Men and Women Having Served as Sunday School Superintendents

The Sunday school has been a strong feature most of the years since it was organized in the seventies. Most of the time the superintendent was named by the congregation; at other times by a committee. In the latter case no record was made. Serving were John Johnson, H. A. Sheldahl, J. H. Myhre, T. K. Tvedt, E. H. Sheldahl, H. C. Holm, O. S. Swandahl, Rev. Buland, Harry Tweedt, Sam Maland, Mary Larson, T. H. Mason, A. A. Fjelland, John Hendricks, Walter Christopher, P. O. Louks and Irving Thompson.

Organists in the Congregation

L. T. Wing was the church's first organist. He was followed by Martha Nerness (Mrs. Thor Bauge). John Stenberg served one year and was succeeded by Anna Tesdahl and Martha Tesdahl. Later Marie Fatland served a number of years. Other organists have been Carrie Mason, Mary Saveraid, Minnie Dobbe, Mrs. S. O. Swandahl, Eleanor and Ruth Johnson, Elizabeth Maland and Leona Brendeland.

The First Organ in the Church

The first organ in the Palestine church made its appearance during Rev. Myhre's pastorate. The pastor, learning that L. T. Wing had an organ, he went to his home and found it to be true. It was an old one, but Mr. Wing had repaired it and had made it quite serviceable. Myhre per-

sued Mr. Wing to take it to church and to play it, too, which he did. Thus Mr. Wing became the first organist in the church. Just how long this organ was used is not known, but it served its purpose—creating a desire for better music.

The introduction of an organ in the church had some opposition as might be expected, it being a new thing. It puzzled some of them. Playing Norwegian songs on a Yankee organ? An impossibility some said, too fantastic to be mentioned. All doubts, however, vanished that Sunday morning when the organ poured forth the sweet strains of songs which people had cherished all their lives. Pastor Myhre, no doubt, felt better as he had been freely criticised.

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Singing Was Early Stressed

The first record of any choir singing dates back to 1875 when Pastor Myhre started a singing class. It was one part singing, the air. When Martha Nerness began to play the organ she made an effort to play according to designated time, but realized it

was hard to do and often found herself several beats ahead of the congregation and to her it sounded terrible. Often she stopped playing to give the audience a chance to catch up. The presence of the choir helped some as the added volume made the lead more prominent.

Four-part choir singing did not materialize to any degree till the latter eighties when Prof. Codington started a singing school in the church and developed a large choir which functioned for many years. Among its members were some splendid talent—Annie, Maggie, Carrie and Louise Sheldahl; Marie and Lena Fatland; Alice and Marie Johnson, Lena Nerness, Carrie Mason, Serine and Bessie Wald, Josie and Lena Seldahl, John Stenberg, Sam and Andrew Maland, Cornilus Holland, Pete and John Brown, Henry and Carl Fatland and others. Members of the choir sang at the 75th anniversary of the church ten years ago.

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THE FIRST CHOIR

Below is a picture of one of the first Palestine choirs



Standing, right to left: John Stenberg, Cornelius Holland, Carrie Mason, Lena Fatland, Maggie Sheldahl, Carrie Sheldahl, Lena Nerness, Sam Maland, Carl Fatland. Sitting, right to left: Marie Johnson, Marie Fatland, Bessie Wald.

BRIEF HISTORY OF PALESTINE LADIES' AID

No congregational history would be at all complete without something being said about the Ladies' Aid Societies. What would we do in the work of the church if it were not for the labors of love on the part of our good women?

Early in the history of Palestine church the Ladies' Aid played a prominent part and this it has continued to do down through the years. The pioneers are all gone. No one is left to tell the story of the early beginnings. But already during Rev. Sheldahl's pastorate there was a Ladies' Aid. Not very highly organized perhaps; but the good women felt the need of getting together to encourage one another in the christian life and helping along in the work of the church, both at home and in foreign fields.

The Ladies' Aids of Palestine church have down through the years worked almost exclusively for missions. Their programs have always been of a spiritual and devotional nature.

In the early days they did hand-work at their meetings, knitting mittens and stockings, making quilts and comforts, shirts for the men and aprons for the women and other more or less useful articles. In the early days the serving at Ladies' Aid was very simple, in keeping with the circumstances and conditions of pioneer life. Later on, however, the Ladies' Aid would meet for all-day sessions, with a complete dinner at noon, and lunch again in the afternoon. Often the entire family would come, men and women sometimes taking part in the devotional program.

Up until the year 1890 there was



Reading left to right--Top row: Mrs. J. Stenberg, Ellen Roe, Mrs. Ole Severeid, Serine Wald. Second row: Mrs. O. S. Swandahl, Mrs. Elias Maland, Engenor Meland, Mrs. Golla Larson, Martha Meland (Stenberg), Mrs. H. Mickelson. Third row: Mrs. L. O. Larson, Mrs. L. T. Wing, Mrs. Elias Apland, Mrs. Erick Sheldahl, Mrs. W. W. Weeks, Mrs. Tone Hokel. Fourth row: Mrs. S. K. Tweedt, Mrs. Osmond Larson, Mrs. Andrew Dobbe, Mrs. R. Brendeland, Mrs. L. L. Tesdell, Mrs. C. M. Tweedt. Fifth row: Rev. Shefveland, Mrs. Shefveland, Mrs. Haaland, Mrs. Knute Apland, Mrs. H. Nass, Mrs. Ole Tesdahl.

only one Ladies' Aid society in Palestine Congregation. Very often they would have two presidents together sharing the responsibilities of the office, these two also taking care of the work now done by the secretary, treasurer and other officers in the society.

In trying to honor those to whom honor is due, we hesitate to mention any names for fear of unintentionally omitting some whose names deserve honorable mention. But among those who took an active part as leaders in the early days we name the following: Mrs. Osmund Sheldahl, Mrs. Erick Sheldahl, Mrs. Ola Johnson (Øino) Mrs. Golla Larson, Mrs. Lars Tesdahl, Mrs. Kari Bauge, Mrs. Ingeborg Maland, Mrs. John Johnson, Mrs. Alv Johnson, Mrs. L. O. Larson, Mrs. Torres Weeks, Mrs. Hacktor Mason, Mrs. T. K. Twedt, Mrs. Andrew Seldahl and Mrs. Lars Eide.

In 1890 when Rev. Farseth of the Bergen congregation resigned and some of the members of the congregation joined with Palestine during Rev. Holm's pastorate it was decided that the former members of Bergen congregation should form the nucleus for the South Ladies' Aid of Palestine Church. From then on until 1935 there were four societies or branches of the Palestine Ladies' Aid, namely, the South Aid, the Church Aid, the Huxley Aid, and the North Aid.

In 1935 three of the Societies consolidated and have since met at the church parlors. The North Aid has not yet joined with the others.

The following have served as presidents for the consolidated Aid Society: Mrs. Severt Westvold, Mrs. Thor Mason, Mrs. S. H. Ness, Mrs. Willie Richardson, Mrs. Anfin Richardson, Mrs. Seward Larson, Mrs. Lewis Larson and Mrs. Chris Wee.

The synodical budget of the congregation has been raised year after year, due in a great measure to the efforts of the Ladies' Aid. Other worthy causes too both local and otherwise have received their support. May God's richest blessing rest

upon their efforts, now and forever.

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Rang the Bell at Various Functions

Through the early years of the congregation the church bell was used at many more functions than it is today. For the forenoon services for instance it was rung three times—an hour before the services, at the time the services started and when the services were over. At all funerals the bell was tolled the same as today. The bell was also used at most of the church weddings in the early days. In this event the sexton was supposed to give the bell a sort of a merry ring, a ring-a-ling effect to indicate a happy, merry occasion; hence the "wedding bells," famed in song.

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The First Violin in the Church

The first appearance of a violin (a fiddle they called it those days) in the church dates back to the latter eighties. Prof. Codington, an instructor in vocal music, conducted a singing school in the church during the winter months. He started with note singing, the rudiments of music, do, me, sol, do and up and accomplished just a lot. At the close of the term they gave a concert. At the concert a friend of his, also a music teacher, assisted, singing a solo. Many eyes glared when a fiddle was produced and played as an accompaniment to the singer. It was a distinct shock to many as the fiddle was regarded as the "Devil's instrument," fit only for dance halls and saloons. Guitars were frequently used.

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These Young Men Deeply Interested

Speaking of being faithful to the teachings of christian mothers, two young men living in Nevada surely remained true to their promises. The two men, known as Thompson and Oriand, joined Rev. Sheldahl's confirmation class and regularly twice a month walked to the Palestine church to meet with the other members. On most of their trips they

remained over night and generally got chance rides back to Nevada. They were confirmed with the rest of the class.

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The Congregation's Charter

Members—None Living

The charter members of the congregation were as follows: Rev. and Mrs. Ole Anfinson and family; Osmond Sheldahl and family, Mr. and Mrs. Erick Sheldahl and family; Mr. and Mrs. Askel Larson and family; Mr. and Mrs. Ole Fatland and family; Mr. and Mrs. K. A. Bauge; Mr. and Mrs. Wier Weeks and family; Mr. and Mrs. Lars Tesdahl and family; Mr. and Mrs. Knute Ersland and family; Mr. and Mrs. Osmond Severson and family; Mr. and Mrs. Engebret Olson and family; Mr. and Mrs. Ivar Tvedt and family; Torbjørn Hauge and family; Mr. and Mrs. Ole Heggen and family; Mrs. Tørris Olson and family; Mrs. Ragna Larson, Ole Apland, Peder Christian, Barney Hill, Ole Hauge and Salve Heggen.

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Men Who Helped Build the First Church

Building the first church was very much a volunteer enterprise—one in which everybody helped as much as they could. Among those working were John Anderson (murar), Hemming Romsa, Ysten Ystenson, Rasmus Lewis, S. T. Arntz, Ola Nese, Osmond Severson, Jonas Lewis, Erick Frovick, Jens Rosland, Gustaf Jacobson, Ola Hidlestad and Lars Tesdahl. Jonas and Rasmus Lewis were especially helpful with the work on the altar and pulpit.

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"Fattigmans Kassen" Had Its Place

In the early days of the congregation they established what they chose to call "Fattigmans Kassen," (poor-man's chest). The church had its unfortunates then as it has had ever since, people that needed help. In those days they were more numerous for the simple reason that there were no poorhouses nor county homes where they could be cared for. As a

result the congregation had to look after them. It worked out a plan to have them cared for at the different homes—a week or two here, a week or so at another home and so on. It somewhat solved the problem. In addition they established "Fattigmans Kassen" into which free-will offerings, assessments and contributions were placed to be used as emergencies arose throughout the year. It was a very praiseworthy phase of church work.

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A Foreign Practice Is Abolished

The practice of passing wine or stronger drinks at funerals in the congregation received a knock-out blow in the nineties when Rev. Thvedt called the congregation together to consider the matter. A motion to stop the practice received an overwhelming majority. The habit, it seems, was the remnant of a custom that had prevailed in Norway and brought over here by the earlier settlers who saw in it no harm.

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When Holm Had to See a Tailor

It was a summer day, late in the seventies when H. C. Holm and Rev. Myhre were relaxing on the lawn. Myhre had just returned from a walk of some distance. Myhre, by the way, never had a buggy nor a horse and, as he expressed it, he used the "apostles' horses,"—he walked wherever he went—if they did not come and get him. Being agile and light of foot he enjoyed walking. Just to show Holm that he could get his feet off the ground and do it with ease he hopped over a nearby hedge with the ease of a scared hare. Not to be outdone, Holm tried it, too, but in the next minute found himself straddling the thorny bush. Well, the upshot was that Holm had to see a "skracdder," a tailor, the following week.

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Sunday a Big Day With Pioneers

Sunday was a big day in the settlement for many years. As they were wont to do in the mother country,

the whole family felt obligated to attend services—father, mother and children and any visitors that might be at their home. It was a part of their lives—had been since childhood.

In addition to the preaching and the singing, the meeting also had a social aspect. With the services over few were in a hurry to go home. They remained for social visits—to talk over the news of the settlement, to exchange views and to find out what the others had heard from home. A Norwegian newspaper, *Decorah Posten* and others, 'tho several months old, was often scanned with the greatest interest for news items from the homeland—Norway.

The Sunday morning services also had another phase. For years the church papers were sent to the pastor. He in turn passed them out to such members of his charge as were subscribers. Mail facilities in general were very poor—and that was to be expected as the system was in its infancy. Some got their mail at Cambridge, others at Nevada and at Sheldahl. Often when a member went to town he got the mail for the entire neighborhood. On Sunday he took it with him to church where it was distributed. Hans Nagelson, the peddler, made this a practice for several years and saw to it that all the mail he got reached the proper party. With the advent of the Milwaukee road the mail service took on another form—one could get his mail at both Huxley and Cambridge.

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Church Struck by Lightning Twice

The Palestine church has been hit by lightning at least twice, but with no serious results. The first time was in July, 1875. While Rev. Myhre was on his way to the church one day he ran across some wood trimmings. He wondered where they came from. After unlocking the church door he had some difficulty in opening it. After forcing it he found a mess of plaster and laths. He realized what had happened the previous night—a bolt of lightning

had hit the tower, knocking off a lot of plaster in the lower part.

The second one occurred at a very unusual time—Christmas eve, 1893. It was a beautiful moonlight night, as balmy as a day in May and the sky was dotted with big thunderheads which displayed plenty of lightning. A light shower fell around nine o'clock, accompanied by lightning and thunder. The rain over, Valbor Sho, who was staying at the Askel Larson home south of the church, noticed a peculiar light in the church steeple. She called the Larsons. Yes, the steeple was on fire. She hastened to the Tom Larson home to spread the news. That done she hurried to the John Maland home. There she was joined by Mother Maland and the two hastened to the L. O. Larson home to apprise them of the fire. Mr. Larson, Paul Revere like, jumped on a horse to further spread the alarm, there being no telephones those days. When he reached the church he found that the blaze had been extinguished. His brother, Tom Larson, had forced his way into the church and single handed had found his way up the tower to the belfry with a bucket of water and put out the blaze. The damage was very small.

Christmas eve was generally the occasion for a big program in the church, but that year none had been planned, due to the fact that Rev. Holm had resigned and was in Eagle Grove.

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The First English Class in the Sunday School

The first English class in the Palestine Sunday school was organized in 1888, largely by the efforts of Osmund Johnson and Andrew Tesdahl, both active workers in the school. The following officers were chosen: Osmund Johnson, teacher, and Andrew Tesdahl, assistant. Henry Sheldahl, secretary and Maggie Sheldahl, treasurer. It had many members from the start and the interest increased as the summer advanced.

A Former Palestine Boy's Rise to Prominence

In speaking of careers and rise to prominence from humble beginnings, few can equal that of P. O. Holland, a member of the Palestine church in the nineties. His rise to positions of trust and prominence is a practical demonstration of what a young man can accomplish who has the will to do and can bravely face all difficulties.

Arriving in the Palestine community in 1893 he spoke of himself as "a poor, ignorant newcomer, unable to speak the American language." Two things he did possess—good health and just a lot of optimism. Eager to learn the language he never passed up an opportunity that would help him. He took an active interest in the church. Taking Rev. Thvedt into his confidence the two studied their English together. Seeing in the young man many possibilities Rev. Thvedt urged him to attend school. This was the turning point in Mr. Holland's life. Acting upon the advice of his pastor he enrolled at St. Olaf college from which he graduated in 1904. He was a wizard in mathematics and stood very high in chemistry and physics.

His rise from then on was very remarkable, both as a teacher and a financier and he contributed much to the development of St. Olaf college. The positions of honor and trust held by him at the time of his death November 15, 1939, probably has no parallel in the N. L. C. A. He was president or vice president of eight banks, a prominent officer in the Lutheran Brotherhood Ins. Co., treasurer of St. Olaf college, chairman of the Board of Trustees of the N. L. C. A. and held many other offices, including the position as head of the school's large dairy farm.

Above all was his fine christian character and had faith in God and man. To him the church was first and the last in his life.

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Remember when the preacher came

for a visit—how scared we were and how spic and span everything had to be, including the children? We kids, timid and bashful, would hide around the corners of the house and when the preacher came in sight how we'd run for the house as fast as our legs would take us? Once inside, how we'd stare in wonderment as if having our picture taken, saying nary a word nor utter a sound and possibly hanging onto mother's apron strings? Wholesome respect for the preacher? Guess that's what you'd call it. Then came the supper—crisp waffles with sweet, sugared cream and a goodiy supply of wild strawberries in season. A feast fit for kings, we thought.

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The "Pige Forening"

A "Pige Forening" (young ladies society) was organized in the congregation in 1886. It was sponsored by Mrs. Mary Stenberg (Mrs. John Stenberg), assisted by Miss Serine Wald. It functioned very much like a ladies' aid, making a variety of articles which were sold at a bazaar, held usually in the fall of the year. It always worked in the interest of a worthy cause and grew to become a strong organization. When the leaders, Mrs. Stenberg and Miss Wald, moved to Slater in the latter nineties the organization became less active and later merged with the Ladies' Aid.

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What Became of the Big Bible?

A large Bible, the big family size, was presented the church shortly after its completion in the sixties. It had a place on the altar, immediately in front of the pulpit and was always left open. One Sunday it was missing and all wondered what had become of it. It was finally located and returned to its place. Tradition has it that when the Bible was returned verses here and there and in some places a line or two had been marked out with a pencil so as to make them unreadable. What became of the Bible no one seems to know.

All Wondered at the Stranger

One Sunday in April, 1876, there walked into the Palestine church a broad shouldered young man with long, wavy hair, full cheeks and a steady step. He carried a large umbrella and seated himself in a pew well towards the front. As he sat down he took from his pocket a handkerchief and proceeded to wipe the sweat from his brow, face and neck. The services were well advanced, the preacher being in the midst of his sermon. The stranger, who sat with a wrapt attention, focused his eyes on the speaker while all around him the people sat wondering who the well featured stranger could be.

They got the stranger's name after the services—it was Hans Christian Holm, the new parochial school teacher in the congregation who was to spend the summer months with them.

A student at the seminary in Minneapolis he had come to Ames the previous evening. There being no one to meet him he started to walk the distance to the Palestine parsonage after having inquired the way. With a large valise in each hand and the umbrella under an arm he began to make the distance. He soon found out that he was not walking on a Minneapolis sidewalk, but over an Iowa mud road.

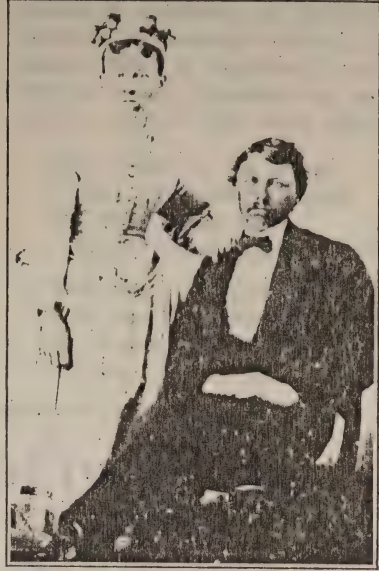
Sweaty and tired he stopped at a farm home. A woman with a kindly smile opened the door. To her he told of his plight. A peddler? That's what she took him to be, but soon changed her mind, invited him in and extended him every courtesy.

A long, restful sleep and a hearty breakfast made him feel fit for the rest of the walk. He reached the Palestine church well nigh the noon hour—among people with whom he labored for many years.

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No history of the Palestine church would be complete without a mention of Golla Larson, the maternity nurse to many Palestine folks, including

the writer. All the children liked to go to her home. She had a winning smile and her cupboard always yielded pieces of candy or tasty cookies. She was rich in human kindness and thought well of everybody.



Mr. and Mrs. Oliver Hill

Mr. and Mrs. Oliver Hill of Cambridge were prominent members of the Nazareth Church for many years.

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We should be guilty of negligence if we did not mention two of the church's most faithful members, Lars and Martha Tesdahl. They were not only stalwarts in body, but in mind and soul as well. No matter who the preacher might be they were always there, working shoulder to shoulder with the man whom they had helped call to serve them as their spiritual advisor. They never made much noise, being rather reserved and lived a sincere life, faithful to the end.

The Palestine congregation today has three daughter congregations—the Bethlehem church at Slater, Bethany at Kelley and Nazareth at Cambridge.

For toil, hard, earnest work and self-denials none can quite equal those of the early pioneer women, who toiled early and late, summer and winter, working side by side with her husband to provide for the home they had established. In speaking of those days Mrs. Ola Øino (Betsy Øino) told how she did the milking one summer. With the three children, one outside the pen, one in a bushel basket near her and the baby in her lap, singing it to sleep, she did the milking, while her husband was busy with other work. And then—they were happy in their work.

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Why the Heavy Emigration From Norway?

Why was the emigration from Norway so very heavy in the latter fifties, the sixties and the seventies?

The reasons were probably many and varied. To some it was the Viking spirit of adventure. To the ambitious it was the prospect of material betterment—to make money. To some it was to meet loved ones who had gone before them and to establish a home. To many it was probably the economic condition in Norway—the question of making a living—a livelihood. This is expressed in a Norwegian song, composed by an emigrant. A few lines read thus:

Dog elsker vi dig Norge
Med dine fjeld og vand
Og vilde nodig bytte
Med vestens prairie land.

Men naar det gjelder brødet
Er det saa strengt et bud
At vi som skovens fugle
Snart maa af redet ud.

After Eighty-Five Years

Eighty-five years have now passed since that eventful day when the charter members of the Palestine congregation met out on the open Iowa prairie for their first divine service in this part of the country. Eighty-five years is a long time. As the years came and went these pioneers witnessed a marvelous transformation—that of the wild prairie being changed into fine fruitful farms and the countryside dotted with churches, school houses and beautiful homes where live a God-fearing, peace-loving people.

The Palestine Church with its spire pointing men heavenward and its church bell calling them to worship, has stood through all the changes of the years. Not only has the topography of the country changed, but the people, too, have changed their mode of living and their manner of thinking and doing. The pioneers have gone. A new generation has come to take their place, and the children of today will be the active

Palestine congregation of tomorrow. Many of the old things have passed away; some have outlived their usefulness, some of them having become relics almost over night.

Not so in the spiritual realm—the heritage of our fathers. All these years the spirit that actuated the pioneers has lived on. The same faith, the same hope and the same love that pulsated in their lives is still at work in our midst. God is the same, His Word is the same and Christ is the same—yesterday, today and forever.

Let us continue to build on the same foundation upon which our pioneer fathers and mothers have built so wisely and so well.

God's word is our great heritage,
It shall be ours forever;
To spread its light from age to age
Shall be our chief endeavor
Through life it guides our way,
In death it is our stay;
Lord grant, while worlds endure,
We keep its teachings pure,
Throughout all generations.

